

Chapter 6 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

Early and continuing coordination with the general public and appropriate public agencies is an essential part of the environmental process to determine the scope of environmental documentation, the level of analysis, potential impacts and mitigation measures and related environmental requirements. Agency consultation and public participation for this project has been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods, including: project development team meetings, interagency coordination meetings. This chapter summarizes the results of Caltrans efforts to fully identify, address and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing coordination.

6.1 Project Development Team

A Project Development Team was formed which includes several Caltrans functional units — Design, Environmental, Planning, Right of Way, Surveys, Construction, Traffic Operations, Engineering Services and Maintenance — FHWA, and other external stakeholders. External stakeholders include Yolo County, the California Highway Patrol (CHP), University of California (UC) at Davis - Department of Human and Community Development, Rumsey Indian Rancheria, local residents and local public officials.

In early 2002, Caltrans District 3 formed a Community Advisory Committee to provide input into the development of context sensitive transportation options for the Highway 16 Safety Improvement and Traffic Calming Projects. CAC members represent various interests in the community including: the Esparto Unified School District, the Esparto Chamber of Commerce, Capay Valley Vision, Esparto Fire District, Rumsey Rancheria, and Capay Valley agricultural businesses. CAC meetings were first held in March 2002 and have and will be held approximately every 2-4 months until the projects completion. These meetings are designed to enhance communication about the proposed projects, and the CAC's input is considered and expressed to the Project Development Team. The Project Development Team, consisting of Caltrans staff and external stakeholders, makes the project recommendations.

6.2 Problem Identification Workshop

A problem identification workshop was held on August 22, 2000 at Esparto High School. The existing alignment (without any improvements) was presented to the public to solicit input on problem areas as seen by the local residents. The problem identification workshop was

scheduled to allow area residents, local public officials, Caltrans staff, and other interested groups to exchange ideas and to discuss project related issues. This in turn helps promote Caltrans goal/value to work in partnership with other agencies and the public to assure that transportation projects are designed and built in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the environment and the communities.

A total of 109 written comments were received at the workshop. The majority of these comments were in favor of curve improvements, shoulder widening, left-turn channelizations, signs, flashing beacon, and greater enforcement of posted speed limits. Approximately 67% of comments were in favor of the shoulder widening. Many residents expressed concerns with respect to flooding and drainage especially between Esparto and Madison. A traffic signal near Esparto High School was suggested. A majority of the residents were concerned about speeding and unsafe passing throughout the project limits. Many residents wanted traffic calming methods employed in the towns of Esparto and Capay. Speed enforcement through these towns was a great concern. There is a general concern that widening the shoulders and improving the horizontal and vertical alignments would only increase speeds.

6.3 Public Outreach Safety Campaign

Caltrans has sponsored a multi-agency and community-based group to identify additional innovative, short-term and cost effective safety improvements. This group developed a public outreach safety campaign, in collaboration with the California Highway Patrol (CHP), to improve safety through motorist awareness.

6.4 Presentations to Community Groups

Caltrans staff has made informational presentations about the Safety Improvement Project to residents at the Madison Migrant Labor Camp in 2001, 2002, and 2003. The majority of the attendees at the meetings were migrant laborers, who live and work in the Capay Valley. Caltrans District 3 provided a Spanish translator to translate the meeting for the attendees. A Highway 16 project brochure in Spanish was also handed out to the meeting participants. This brochure is also available in English.

6.5 Public informational Meetings & Workshops

Two public information meetings have been held to allow the public to ask questions about the Safety Improvement and Traffic Calming Projects on Highway 16 on November 6th, 2002 and November 7th, 2002 in Esparto. To publicize these meetings, Caltrans used newspaper display advertisements, both in English and Spanish, in the Valley Voice and the Woodland Daily

Democrat. Bilingual meeting invitations were mailed to all residential addresses in the Capay Valley and Winters, as well as to other public agencies and stakeholders. Approximately 6,000 meeting invitations were mailed. Spanish translation services were provided. The combined community attendance at these meetings was approximately 100 people. Caltrans received written comments from approximately 30 members of the community at these meetings. Those comments requiring a response received a letter.

A public workshop was held on the evening of May 19th, 2003 in Esparto to discuss the traffic-calming project for the Yolo County communities of Esparto and Capay and to discuss the SR 16 Transportation Concept Report (TCR) with area residents. Aside from display boards and the short presentations, interactive polling technology allowed the audience to use wireless electronic keypads and provide immediate feedback. Outreach efforts were designed to specifically consider the Hispanic or Latino population, which constitutes 42% of the population. Approximately 2,600 bilingual invitations were sent via mail. Half-page ads, in English and Spanish were placed in the Valley Voice, a free monthly paper. In addition, the Public Information Office sent press releases in English and Spanish. A TCR brochure was provided in both English and Spanish.

Two flood protection meetings were held with Yolo County to gauge the interest of the community in pursuing additional flood protection for the Madison Area next to SR 16. The two meetings were held on August 5th and August 7th 2003. Caltrans provided a Spanish translator both nights.

A Traffic Calming Focus meeting was held on August 10, 2005 with the citizens of Capay to discuss the planned improvements to SR 16 through Capay. A pre-meeting walk through of the planned project site in Capay was also provided for the public.

6.6 Outreach Materials

A brochure titled “Safety Improvement and Traffic Calming Project in Esparto and Capay” was mailed on October 10, 2003 to approximately 2,400 homes, businesses, and local agencies. The brochure explained the proposed projects on SR 16, and was also available in Spanish.

A website was developed to give an overview of the Safety Improvement Project, Traffic Calming Project, and other highway 16 safety improvements Caltrans has initiated. The website is <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist3/projects/yolo16/>.

6.7 Notice of Preparation

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report was sent out to the public and resource agencies to solicit early comments on the proposed project. The circulation period for the NOP ran from June 15th, 2003 to July 16th, 2003. The twenty-five comment letters are included as Appendix H.

6.8 Capay Valley Vision

Caltrans awarded a Partnership Planning Grant in 2002 to SACOG. Capay Valley Vision was contracted by SACOG to develop a corridor study, which will articulate goals and objective for transportation improvements in the Capay Valley and document community interests. A Capay Valley Vision representative has been included as a member of the CAC and the PDT.

6.9 California Highway Patrol (CHP)

In July 2001, CHP assigned a second full-time officer to patrol the highway between I-505 and the community of Brooks. The CHP endorses shoulder widening, since this would allow for more effective enforcement of traffic violations.